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Letter dated 9 November 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit to you the statement of the Government of the Republic of Burundi to clarify the inaccurate interpretations of the President's message to the nation of 2 November 2015 on disarmament of civilians.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anesie **Ndayshimiye**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 9 November 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

Communiqué of the Government following the misrepresentations of the President's message to the nation of 2 November 2015 on the disarmament of civilians

His Excellency the President's 2 November 2015 message to the nation in the national language, in which he offered a last chance to those in possession of illegal weapons, especially those who had infiltrated among the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods where the latest incidents of insurrection related to the July elections had occurred, elicited several national and international reactions. The reactions clearly showed that the message was misunderstood by the public because of the speculations of those who deliberately distorted the words of the Head of State.

The Government of Burundi would therefore like to set the record straight:

(a) Since the end of the elections and the establishment of the institutions provided for by the Constitution and the Arusha Accords, those involved in the insurrection and the attempted coup d'état of 13 May 2015 have morphed into a terrorist network and started perpetrating acts hitherto unknown in this country, including attacks on civilian targets such as abodes of the clergy;

(b) It should be recalled that in the night of 26 to 27 October of this year, heavily armed commandos from Cibitoke launched an attack on the Kamenge youth centre convent, where Monsignor Jean Louis Nahimana, Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, lived together with other priests; luckily they escaped unscathed from the attack. In a statement issued on 28 October, the Government condemned this heinous act and called on the international community to do likewise; unfortunately that call fell on deaf ears;

(c) The atrocities have continued. People have been kidnapped then brutally killed, including by having their heads cut off and their organs mutilated. In the night of 4 to 5 November 2015, in Mutakura in the same Cibitoke area, terrorists murdered three people, including an insurance company employee called Gabin Sungura, whose heart was ripped out of his body, and another person, whose head was chopped off;

(d) In the night of 7 to 8 November 2015, these terrorists struck again; they attacked a nightclub in the Kajiji neighbourhood, located in the Kanyosha area of the Muha urban commune, killing seven people on the spot and injuring two others;

There is no justifying such atrocities on political grounds, as some would have us believe.

(e) From the beginning, the Government of Burundi has continued to denounce the terrorist bent of the insurrection and has repeatedly called upon the international community to bring sufficient pressure to bear on those who arm, train or finance these criminals to put an end to such a dangerous venture, which was likely to develop into a terrorist network which would be difficult to control; that is

what is happening now. It is therefore hard to believe that no one in the international community has yet spoken out against these atrocities and their perpetrators;

(f) In the face of such terrorist acts represented by criminals disguised as peaceful demonstrators to engage in these crimes and despite the Government's continued calls to the international community since the beginning of the insurrection, it is proper that any principled President should take the measures that are his prerogative under the constitution as guarantor of the order and security of every citizen;

It therefore fell to the President to speak to the nation in no unclear terms on 2 November 2015. It was a final appeal, after the grace period granted to those in possession of illegal weapons under Decree No. 100/36 of 24 September 2015 exempting owners of illegal weapons from criminal prosecution. The decision gave any person illegally possessing firearms a one-month time limit to voluntarily surrender them.

It was also further proof that the Head of State was inclined to grant clemency to holders of illegal firearms, including those who were disenchanted or intimidated, so that they could voluntarily surrender them to avoid criminal prosecution;

(g) It could therefore not be viewed as a call to violence;

(h) The individual reactions and statements made in the wake of the President's 2 November 2015 message to the nation suggest that those who made them laboured under misconceptions which were the work of hostile political interests, because no language in the message can be viewed as an incitement to violence, let alone to genocide, the horror of which Burundians have known too well since independence;

Those who flirt with genocide are the very persons who are banking on a national catastrophe to gain political power after realizing that they stood no chance in elections. They have made no secret of their design before the international community.

(i) The Government of Burundi would therefore like to reassure Burundians and the international community that the message of the Head of State cannot be construed as a call for the persecution of anyone, but rather a measure to restore peace and security throughout the country and to deny any haven to hotbeds of criminality that would pose a threat to peaceful and honest citizens;

(j) The Government would like to remind the international community that, wherever terrorist groups engage in hostage-taking in the world, as has been happening recently, the duty of the Government is to primarily protect citizens and to do its utmost to free hostages from the clutches of terrorists, exercising utmost precaution while minimizing damage. That is what President Nkurunziza did in his message, which has been misconstrued in some quarters;

(k) The Government reiterates its commitment to exercise the utmost professionalism in pursuing its goal of disarming the holdouts, and wishes to assure people living in the neighbourhoods concerned that everything will be done to protect them and their property;

(l) The Government calls on the people of Burundi in general, and the inhabitants of the capital, Bujumbura, in particular, to reject and condemn any

return to the mayhem of the past. The Government calls on the people to remain calm and united and to prepare peacefully for the upcoming inter-Burundian dialogue.

Done at Bujumbura, on 8 November 2015

(*Signed*) Philippe **Nzobonariba**
Secretary-General and Spokesman of the Government